Story by Kyo Shirodaira
Art by Eita Mizuno
10
Spiral
THE BONDS OF REASONING

Spiral THE BONDS OF REASONING 10

STORY/KYO SHIRODAIRA
ART/EITA MIZUNO

Walk on through

Walk till you run

And don't look back

For SPIRAL is here

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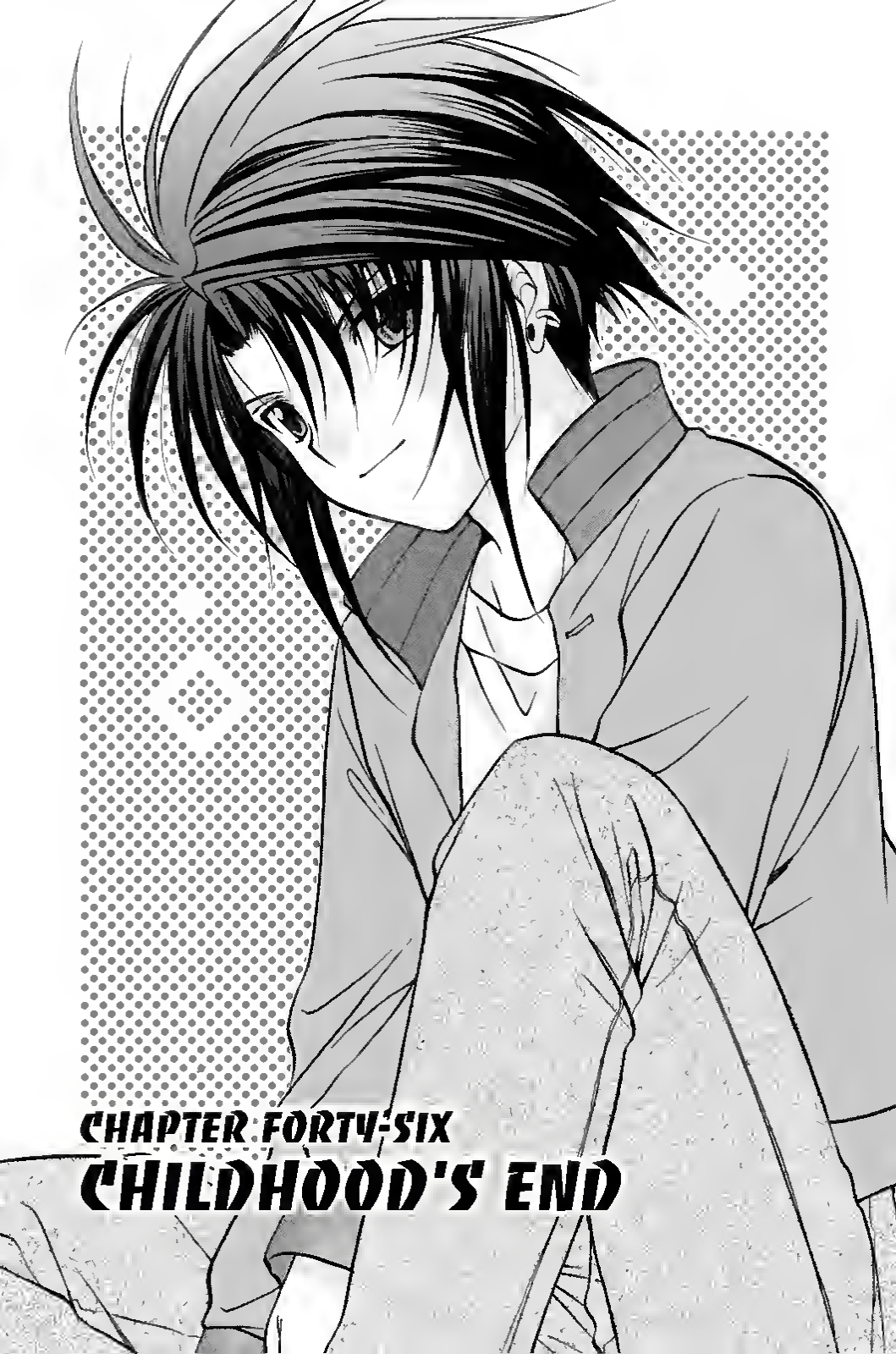


CHAPTER FORTY-SIX
CHILDHOOD'S END

WE'LL BRING HIM DOWN.
THE INVIN-CIBLE GUN WITH WINGS ...
...YOU KNOW ...
(CHUCKLE)
...KANON HILBERT!

I MEAN THAT PIG-TAILED GIRL.
WHO ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
...YOU'LL OWE HER THE REST OF YOUR LIFE FOR THIS.
IF SHE HADN'T STOPPED YOU...
...AND BOUGHT US THIS TIME...
...WE WOULDN'T EVEN BE DISCUSSING A PLAN.
MU (SULK)
SO LISTEN UP.
RIGHT NOW, SHE'S THE FARTHEST THING FROM MY MIND.
...I'LL THANK HER AFTER WE GET OUT OF THIS ALIVE.

WE'LL ONLY HAVE A SHOT AT KANON HILBERT WHEN A NUMBER OF CONDITIONS THAT USUALLY OCCUR RANDOMLY HAPPEN SIMULTANEOUSLY...
EVEN THEN, WITH HIS GROSSLY SHARP REFLEXES, WE'LL ONLY HAVE A SECOND.
NOT TO MENTION HE'LL BE ON HIGH ALERT TO PREVENT THOSE CONDITIONS FROM FALLING INTO PLACE.
WE HAVE TO OVERCOME THOSE TWO FACTORS, PRY HIS GUARD OPEN...
...AND NAIL HIM WITH THE ANESTHETIC BULLET.
THIS PLAN WON'T BE EASY, LET ALONE SAFE.
WE'RE READY FOR THAT.

OKAY, EVERYONE. I'M GOING TO EXPLAIN TO YOU...
IF IT IS, THEN ALL THE BETTER.
I THINK IT MIGHT BE PRETTY SIMILAR TO WHAT I HAD IN MIND.
PLEASE TELL US WHAT YOUR PLAN IS.
...MY PLAN OF ATTACK.

...THAT'S EVERYTHING.
YOU ALL HAVE A JOB TO DO.
ANYBODY GOT A PROBLEM?

L-
LITTLE BROTHER ...
IS IT REALLY NECESSARY TO GO THAT FAR?
JUST CATCHING KANON-KUN OFF-GUARD IN THE FIRST PHASE...
...AND USING THAT SPLIT SECOND TO ATTACK IN WAVES WITH THE ANESTHETIC WEAPONS SHOULD BE ENOUGH!
...YOU MIGHT BE RIGHT.
BUT WE ONLY HAVE FOUR MODIFIED ANESTHETIC WEAPONS.
AGAINST AN OPPONENT LIKE HIM, HAVING SO LITTLE FIREPOWER IS AN AWFULLY BIG RISK.
ON TOP OF THAT, HE CAN'T KILL ME OR MY SISTER...
...BUT YOU GUYS ARE A DIFFERENT STORY...

WE KNOW THE RISKS!
I'M NOT SAYING WE CAN WIN AGAINST KANON-KUN WITHOUT PUSHING IT TO THE LIMIT...
EVEN IF THE WAVE ATTACK IS EFFECTIVE...
...THE CHANCE OF YOU GUYS BEING KILLED IN HIS COUNTER-ATTACK IS TOO GREAT.
...BUT IN PHASE ONE, ISN'T YOUR LIFE IN AS GREAT A DANGER TOO!?
COMPARED TO YOUR CHANCES OF DYING IF YOU GET INVOLVED, IT'S FAR SAFER.
IN SHORT, IT WON'T BE ENOUGH TO TAKE HIM BY COMPLETE SURPRISE.
SINCE HE'S ALREADY FORESEEN IT, HE'LL HAVE A COUNTER-MEASURE IN STORE FOR IT.
PLUS, USING A WAVE ATTACK TO THROW HIM OFF-GUARD IS EXACTLY WHAT HE'LL BE EXPECTING.

TO REALLY GET HIM TO LEAVE HIMSELF OPEN...
...WE NEED TO DO SOMETHING THAT'S NOT AT ALL WHAT HE'S EXPECTING.
A COMPLETELY OUT-OF-THE-BLUE MOVE.
...OF COURSE I REALIZE THAT SOMEBODY COULD STILL DIE IN THIS ATTACK PLAN.
BUT TO DEAL WITH THAT DANGER...
...I'LL STILL PUT MY FAITH IN KANON HILBERT'S ABILITIES.
I KNOW HE'S NOT STUPID ENOUGH TO ACCIDENTALLY KILL SOMEBODY.

ANY MORE COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE STRATEGY?
.....
...ALL RIGHT.
!
LET'S GO WITH YOUR PLAN.

...GUESS I DON'T HAVE ANY REASON TO REFUSE.
COUNT ME IN.
IF KOUSUKE'S IN, THEN I'VE GOT NO COMPLAINTS EITHER.
HOW COULD THE LITTLE BROTHER!!!
.....
...GROW SO MUCH IN SUCH A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME?

...I WON'T ARGUE THAT IT'S OUR BEST CHANCE AT A SURPRISE ATTACK.
WE'LL BE WALKING A TIGHTROPE FOR A LOT OF IT, BUT ...
.....
TON! (PAT)

LET'S PUT THIS PLAN INTO ACTION.
HAA

THEN IT'S SETTLED.
SUKKU (STAND)
WE CAN'T JUST SIT HERE FOREVER.

... BUT ...

SHOULDN'T WE GO AND SAVE HER?
IF WE'RE GOING TO MAKE OUR MOVE NOW...
...WE CAN'T JUST LEAVE HER TO KEEP STALLING KANON.
HUP!
...WHAT ABOUT THE LITTLE LADY?
AND DON'T WE NEED KANON TO COME TO US ANYWAY?
HOW DO WE LET HER KNOW THAT WE'RE READY TO TAKE ACTION?
HE'S RIGHT.
SU (SWSH)
?
I'VE THOUGHT THAT THROUGH.
DON'T WORRY.

IT MAY BE EXASPERATING, BUT...
...I'VE GOT A PIANO.

AYUMU-KUN SHOULD'VE KILLED KANON-KUN BY NOW...
...SO WHY DOESN'T IT FEEL THAT WAY?
SOME-THING'S NOT RIGHT ...
IN FACT...IT FEELS THE OPPOSITE ...
FU (SIGH)

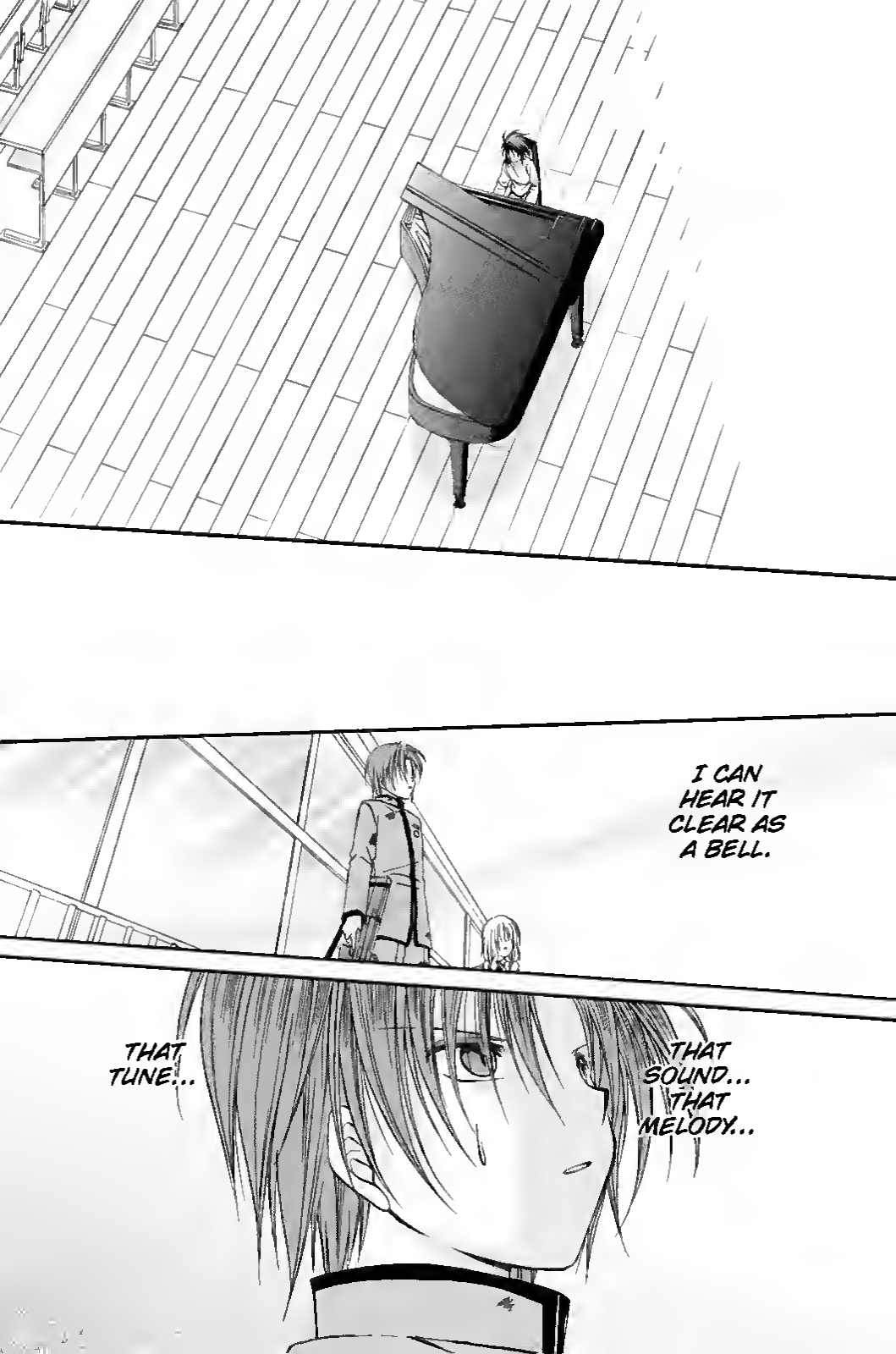
GATA (CLATTER)
A PIANO...
HUH?
...BY NOW IT MUST BE PAINFUL FOR YOU JUST TO STAY ON YOUR FEET.
IN SPITE OF ALL THAT PAIN...
...DO YOU STILL BELIEVE IN AYUMU-KUN'S ABILITY TO TURN THIS BATTLE AROUND?

YES.
YOU'RE AFRAID OF WHAT SURPRISES HE MIGHT HAVE IN STORE, AREN'T YOU?
THAT'S WHY YOU TOOK HIM HOSTAGE RIGHT AWAY...
...TO LIMIT HIS FREEDOM.
AND I'M SURE YOU WOULDN'T LIKE SEEING YOUR HARD WORK POP LIKE A BUBBLE.
WITH NARUMI-SAN UNBOUND, THERE'S NO TELLING WHAT HE'LL DO.
HE'S EVEN CAPABLE OF RENDERING YOUR CAREFUL PLANS MEANING-LESS.

I SHOULD'VE GUESSED...
I'M REALLY GETTING DIZZY NOW.
.....
BOTA
ぼた
BOTA (DRIP)
ぼた
MAYBE THIS WAS FUTILE AFTER ALL...

A...
...PIANO...?
.....!

...NA-RUMI-SAN...!
SOMEBODY'S PLAYING THE PIANO...?
...YOU'RE STARTING TO MOVE...


I CAN HEAR IT CLEAR AS A BELL.
THAT TUNE...
THAT SOUND... THAT MELODY...

THAT SONG IS...
...FROM FRANZ LISZT'S "POETIC AND RELIGIOUS HARMONIES."
"THE BLESSING OF GOD IN SOLITUDE"!?

ALL RIGHT, KANON HILBERT.
LET'S FINISH ON THIS NOTE!

Spiral
THE BONDS OF REASONING

SPIRAL

CHAPTER FORTY-SEVEN
YOUR BATTLE SONG
THAT SONG IS...
...FRANZ LISZT'S...

CHAPTER FORTY-SEVEN
YOUR BATTLE SONG

...PLAY LIKE KIYOTAKA-SAN DID...
KYOTO (CLACK)
...HE REALLY DOES...
YORO (WOBBLE)

MAYBE THAT'S WHY HE SEES A WHOLE DIFFERENT WORLD...
THERE'S SOMETHING DANGEROUS ABOUT THIS KID...
...HE'S NOTHING LIKE HIM.
...BUT AT THE SAME TIME...
PITA (FREEZE)
I'M SORRY ...
...SIS.
FOR ROPING YOU INTO THIS CRAZY PLAN.

SO STOP APOLOGIZING.
...I'M IN THIS BECAUSE I WANT TO BE.
JUST DON'T HESITATE WHEN IT COMES TO THE FINAL MOMENT.
IF IT MEANS GETTING TO SEE KIYOTAKA-SAN...
...I'LL SPILL AS MUCH BLOOD AS IT TAKES.

SO IT ALWAYS COMES BACK TO MY BROTHER, HUH...?
NOW'S NOT THE TIME TO WORRY ABOUT THAT.
I HAVE TO FOCUS ON WHAT I CAN DO TO PUT AN END TO THIS.
WHETHER OR NOT THIS IS ALL A PART...
...OF MY BROTHER'S GRAND SCHEME...

...RIGHT NOW...
...I HAVE TO PUT THIS PLAN INTO ACTION!

...WHAT A SOUND.
...I USED TO THINK THAT EVERY PIANO PLAYER SOUNDED THE SAME...
...BUT THIS...
...IS COMPLETELY DIFFERENT.
...AND YET IT MAKES ME UNEASY...
.....
I WAS WRONG.
JUST LISTENING TO IT MAKES ME FEEL LIKE ALL THE DARKNESS IS DISAP-PEARING...

AT FIRST ...
...I THOUGHT KIYOTAKA-SAMA'S GOAL WAS TO FORCE THE LITTLE BROTHER TO FIGHT NO MATTER WHAT.
I THOUGHT HE WAS TRYING TO SHARPEN THE FANG THAT WOULD BRING DOWN GOD.
BUT...
...ANYBODY WILL FIGHT IF THEY'RE DESPERATE ENOUGH.
PLUS, A WEAPON WITH THAT KIND OF POWER...
...MAY NOT BE WILLING TO SAVE ANYONE.
IF IT STRAYS ONE STEP, IT COULD EASILY TURN INTO A FORCE OF PURE DESTRUCTION.

ONLY NOW DOES THE LITTLE BROTHER ...
...TRULY UNDERSTAND WHAT IT IS TO FIGHT.
THAT IS TRUE MATURITY ...
HE KNOWS WHAT IT IS TO SAVE SOMEONE ...
...AND PROTECT OTHERS THROUGH BATTLE.
...AND THAT IS WHAT KIYOTAKA-SAMA WAS AFTER.
MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT.
BUT HASN'T THAT HIYONO GIRL MESSED UP WHATEVER KIYOTAKA HAD PLANNED OUT?
EVEN HIYONO-SAN'S ACTIONS MIGHT BE A PART OF HIS CALCULATIONS.

I DON'T CARE WHAT'S GOING THROUGH KIYOTAKA'S HEAD.
RIGHT NOW I'LL JUST BE HAPPY IF WE ALL GET OUT OF THIS ALIVE.
SO LET'S QUIT WORRYING AND DIVE RIGHT IN.
BESIDES, IT'LL BE MORE FUN THAT WAY.
NO MATTER HOW DEEP INTO THE SHADOWS THIS PATH MIGHT TAKE US...
...THERE'S NO GOING BACK.
BOTA (DRIP)
ぼたっ

YOU HEAR THAT PIANO, DON'T YOU?
THERE'S NO MISTAKE. THAT'S NARUMI-SAN PLAYING.
IT'S THE SOUND I WAS WAITING FOR.
NARUMI-SAN'S READY TO SAVE YOU. THERE WON'T BE ANY KILLING.

So I...
GURA (STAGGER)
...wi...
...nn...
DOSA (THUMP)

YOU HAVEN'T WON YET...

WHATEVER HOPE AYUMU-KUN THINKS HE'S FOUND, IT'S JUST A TEMPORARY FACADE.
I'LL TEAR IT DOWN IN NO TIME.
...YOU HAVEN'T ...
GU (GRIP)
IT'S NO USE AVOIDING IT.
HE HAS TO KILL ME.
...WON YET...!

AND IT'S RESONATING LOUD AND CLEAR...
THAT SOUNDS LIKE A PIANO, ALL RIGHT.
IT'S THE PIANO'S CLEAR, UNADULTERATED SOUND.
NO...
HE MUST HAVE ...
THAT CAN'T BE...
HE'S NOT USING ANY AMPLIFIERS.
...HOOKED IT UP TO THE SCHOOL'S P.A. SYSTEM SO IT WOULD BE AUDIBLE THROUGHOUT THE CAMPUS.

THERE'S NO WAY IT COULD CARRY SO WELL...
THAT'S THE PIANO FOR YOU.
ONLY A TALENTED PIANIST CAN PULL IT OFF.
...AYUMU NARUMI...
...YOU PLAY BETTER THAN I THOUGHT.
SU (STEP)

!
WAIT, RUTH-KUN!!
YOU CAN'T GO IN THERE!
PASHI (GRAB)
...I THOUGHT WATCHERS DIDN'T INTERFERE, NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENED.
THAT'S TRUE, BUT...
...JUST LISTEN TO ME FOR A SECOND.

KIYOTAKA'S SETUP MIGHT SEEM CRUEL AND UNFAIR, BUT...
...IT'S THE GENTLEST, MOST DIRECT PATH FOR ALL OF US TO FOLLOW.
IF YOU INTERFERE WITH HIS PLAN...
...AN EVEN CRUELER FATE AWAITS YOU.
YOU'LL ONLY BRING MORE PAIN UPON YOURSELF!
SU (SWSH)
.....
I'M ALREADY PREPARED FOR THE WORST-CASE SCENARIO.
...EVEN IF IT MEANS KILLING KANON-KUN WITH YOUR OWN TWO HANDS?

AND I DON'T CARE. I'M STILL GOING IN.
YES.
THE PIANO'S ...
...CALLING ME...

PO (BEEP)
PO
PO
SU (LIFT)
RRRING
RRRING
RRRING
PU (CLICK)
IT'S ME. KIRIE.

THERE'S NO NEED TO GATHER THE CHILDREN ANYMORE.
THAT'S RIGHT. I'M TELLING YOU TO CALL IT OFF.
DON'T ASK ME WHY; THEY'RE JUST NOT NEEDED!
ONCE YOU'VE GOT EVERYTHING SETTLED ON YOUR END...
...GET AHOLD OF KIYOTAKA FOR ME A.S.A.P.
...WHAT?
LISTEN, BUDDY!
YOU DON'T HAVE TO TELL ME HOW HARD IT IS TO TRACK HIM DOWN!
HAVE HIM CALL ME ANYWAY!!
I NEED TO KNOW WHAT KIND OF FUTURE KIYOTAKA SEES...
...AND WHAT HIS MOTIVES TRULY ARE!
I'M DOWN-RIGHT AFRAID THAT...
...HE'S CONSPIRING AGAINST US TOO!

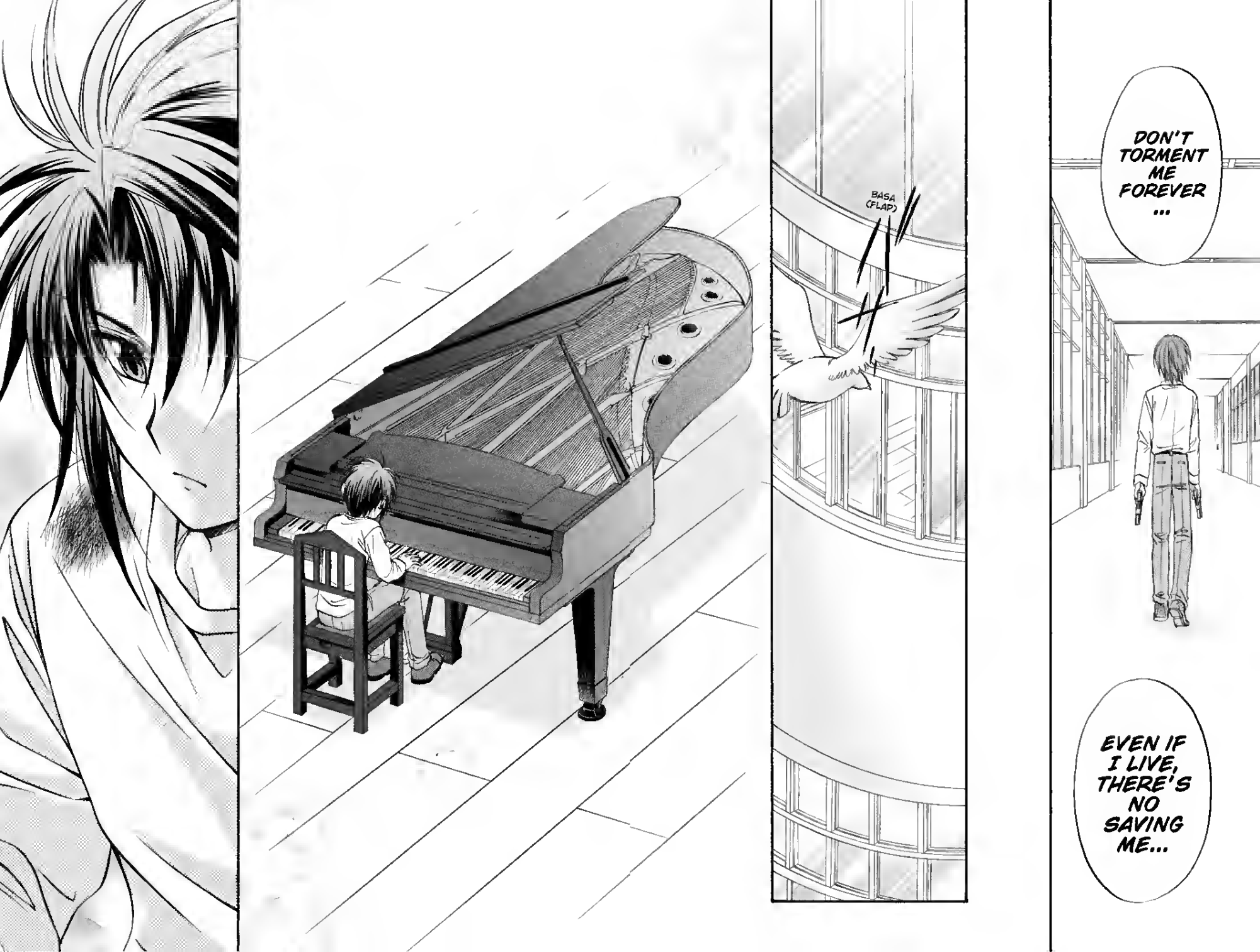
AYUMU-KUN...
RUTH-KUN...
NO MATTER HOW MUCH YOU FIGHT IT...
...YOU'RE ONLY PROLONGING YOUR SUFFERING...
PATAN (SNAP)
10/7/14
...YOU CAN'T CHANGE DESTINY.
KACHI (CLICK)
第6音楽室

SUI (LIFT)
...WHEN YOU WAKE UP...
...I GUESS YOU'LL KNOW WHO WON...
...AND WHO LOST.
OR MAYBE EVERYBODY ...
...EXCEPT KIYOTAKA HAS ALREADY LOST.

PASA (FLAP)
...WHY CAN'T YOU AND AYUMU-KUN...
...UNDERSTAND THAT NOT KNOWING WHEN TO GIVE UP ONLY LEADS TO MISERY?
.....
CHA (CLACK)
PACHIN (SNAP)

ASSUMING THAT YOU CAN ACCOMPLISH ANYTHING IF YOU STUBBORNLY REFUSE TO STEP DOWN ...
...IS AN ARROGANT WAY OF THINKING.
SOME-TIMES KILLING ...
...IS THE GREATEST ACT OF MERCY YOU CAN OFFER!
.....

SIGN: INFIRMARY
保健室
GARARA (SLIDE)


BASA (FLAP)
DON'T TORMENT ME FOREVER ...
EVEN IF I LIVE, THERE'S NO SAVING ME...

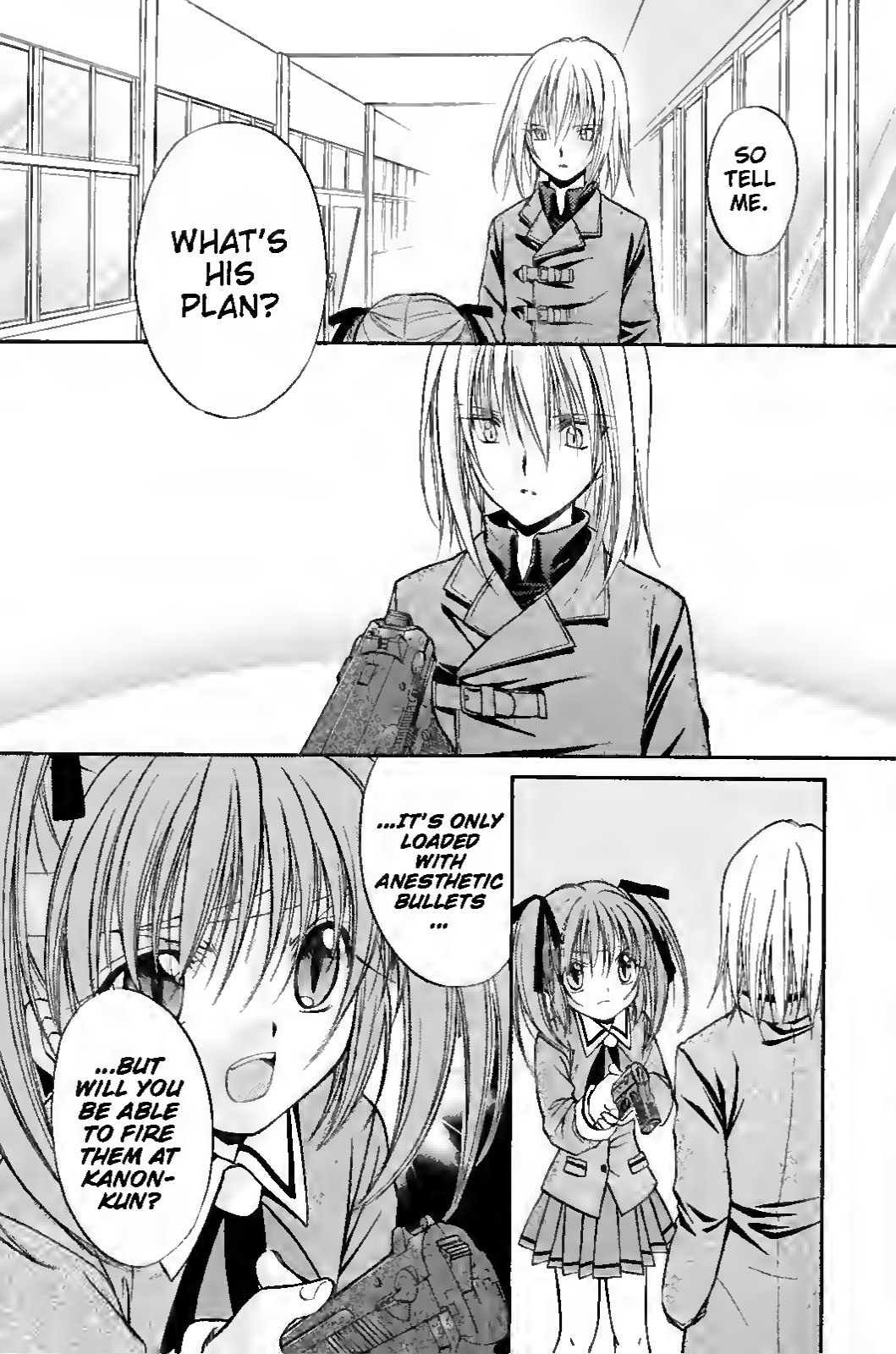
BASA (FLAP)

DON'T TORMENT ME FOREVER ...
EVEN IF I LIVE, THERE'S NO SAVING ME...

BASA (FLAP)
TO (TAP)

TSUKIOMI HIGH SCHOOL MAIN BUILDING, FIRST FLOOR HALLWAY
HUFF HUFF
...I'M MORE HANDICAPPED THAN I THOUGHT.
ALL MY OLD WOUNDS ARE ACHING.
AND I THINK A BONE IN MY LEG MIGHT BE BROKEN TOO.
MUKU (RISE)
むく…
I CAN'T REST HERE.
I HAVE TO HURRY AND FIND EYES-KUN.
GU (PUSH)
FU (LOOM)
I HAVE TO FIND HIM...

DO YOU NEED ME FOR SOME-THING?
...THE LITTLE BROTHER WAS RIGHT.
...IT'S NOT LIKE I NEED NARUMI JUNIOR TO DECIDE THAT FOR ME.
HE SAID IF YOU HEARD THIS SONG...
...YOU WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO STAY AWAY.


SO TELL ME.
WHAT'S HIS PLAN?
...IT'S ONLY LOADED WITH ANESTHETIC BULLETS ...
...BUT WILL YOU BE ABLE TO FIRE THEM AT KANON-KUN?

GU (GRAB)
IF I COULDN'T, I WOULDN'T BE STANDING HERE.
I'VE ALREADY PREPARED MYSELF FOR THE WORST.
DON'T GET THE WRONG IDEA.
THIS ISN'T WHAT YOU'RE THINK-ING.
WE'RE DOING THIS TO PREVENT THE WORST FROM HAPPENING.
YOU NEED TO BE PREPARED FOR THAT TOO!

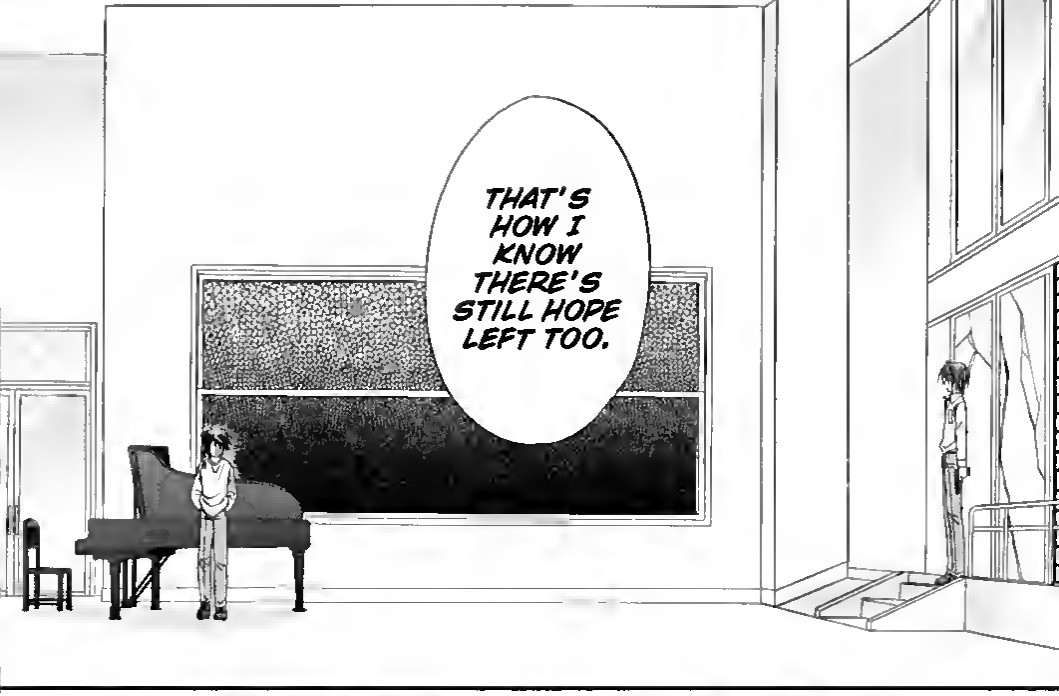
The worst won't happen...
...I'm going to make sure it doesn't.
...OKAY.
YOU'RE RIGHT.
SU (RELEASE)
NOW I'LL TELL YOU...
KOKU (NOD)
...ALL ABOUT THE LITTLE BROTHER'S PLAN.

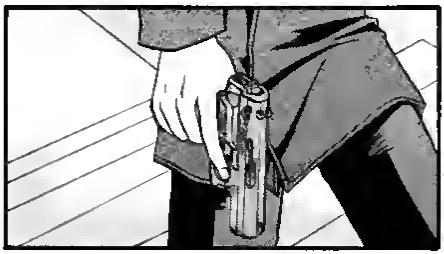
!!!
PARI
(CRUNCH)

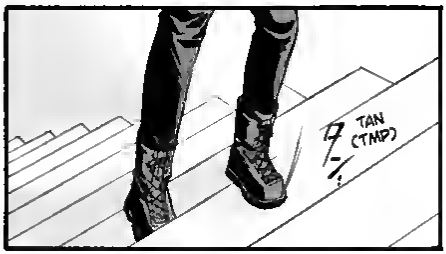
BASA (FLAP)
...SO THE SONG'S FINALLY OVER.

PARIN
CRACK
THAT'S A PRETTY GRIM LOOK YOU'RE WEARING.

...WELL, I JUST HEARD A SOUR PERFORMANCE.
IT SEEMS ...
GU (GRIP)
...YOU STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND TRUE DESPAIR, DO YOU?
... THAT'S NOT TRUE.
I GET IT, ALL RIGHT.


THAT'S HOW I KNOW THERE'S STILL HOPE LEFT TOO.




TAN (TMP)

Spiral
THE BONDS OF REASONING

SPIRAL

CHAPTER FORTY-EIGHT
TO LIVE AGAIN
.....
TON (TMP)
THIS FESTIVAL'S REACHED ITS CONCLUSION.
YOU WON'T BE KILLING ANYBODY.
AND I WON'T BE KILLING YOU.

I'M HERE TO STOP YOU.
KANON HILBERT.
I'M GOING TO SHOW YOU...

CHAPTER FORTY-EIGHT
TO LIVE AGAIN

TSUKIOMI HIGH SCHOOL
MAIN BUILDING, SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY
...THE PIANO'S STOPPED.
THAT MEANS KANON AND NARUMI-KUN HAVE MET.
YOU'RE PROBABLY RIGHT.
WE'D BETTER HURRY.
THE LAST PHASE OF THE ATTACK DEPENDS ON US.

...THE LAST PHASE OF THE ATTACK, HUH?
THAT NARUMI-KUN THINKS UP SOME WILD IDEAS.
AND THAT PART OF THE ATTACK IS THE MOST DANGEROUS TIGHTROPE WE'LL HAVE TO WALK.
WILL WE BE ABLE TO...!
...MAKE IT ACROSS TO THE OTHER SIDE...
...OR NOT!?

DON'T TALK TO ME ABOUT SOME ALLEGED FUTURE.
UNLESS YOU KILL ME, I WON'T STOP.
I CAN'T BE STOPPED.
YOU STILL DON'T GET IT, DO YOU?
IT'S THE ONLY WAY YOU CAN PROTECT EVERYONE.
MY ONE HOPE IS FOR YOU TO KILL ME.
I KNOW THERE'S A WAY TO STOP YOU THAT DOESN'T INVOLVE MURDER.
...OH REALLY?

...SO YOU'VE DISCOVERED THE CHINK IN MY RAZOR-SHARP REFLEXES, HAVE YOU?
BUT IF YOU TRY TO STOP YOUR REFLEXES ONCE THEY'VE BEEN ACTIVATED, THE NEURAL MESSAGES TO YOUR MUSCLES ARE CONFUSED ...
...AND FOR A SPLIT SECOND YOU ARE PERFECTLY STILL, UNABLE TO REACT EVEN IF ANOTHER ATTACK COMES AT YOU.
WHEN YOUR BODY SENSES AN ATTACK, IT AUTO-MATICALLY REACTS TO KILL YOUR ATTACKER.
THAT'S RIGHT.
...THEREBY RENDERING YOURSELF TEMPORARILY VULNERABLE.
SO IF YOU ACCIDENTALLY GO INTO YOUR INSTINCTIVE KILL MODE, YOU HAVE TO FORCE YOUR BODY TO STOP...
AND THERE ARE PEOPLE YOU ABSOLUTELY CANNOT KILL.

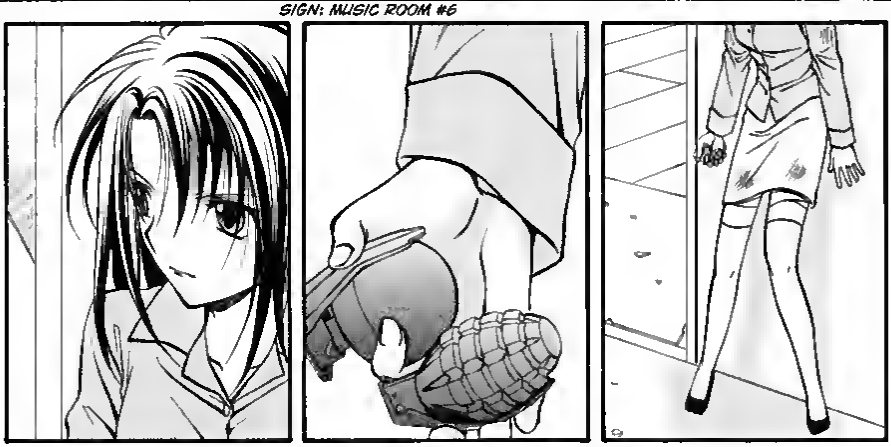
BINGO.
THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT I INTEND TO DO.
SO YOU'D TRY TO CREATE SUCH AN OPENING ...
...TO NAIL ME WITH AN ANESTHETIC. IS THAT IT?
HEH...
...YOU'RE RIGHT. I DO RUN THAT RISK.
BUT IF I REALLY TRIED, I COULD EASILY OVERCOME THAT.

IF I JUST KEEP MY COOL, I CAN CONTROL MY REFLEXES, EVEN IN A SURPRISE ATTACK.
I DON'T GET SO FLUSTERED THAT I'D FORGET TO MAINTAIN MY CONTROL.
...JUST HOW ARE YOU KEEPING YOUR COOL?
YOU'RE IN A CONSTANT STATE OF AGITATION.
YOU'RE ONLY SUPPRESSING IT, IS ALL.
YOU TOTALLY LOSE IT AT THE LEAST PROVOCATION.
YOU REALLY DON'T THINK YOU'RE FLUSTERED?

YOU'RE ALREADY RIGHT WHERE I NEED YOU.
YOU WERE SHAKEN BY MY PIANO PLAYING.
THAT'S WHY YOU WALKED RIGHT INTO THIS MUSIC ROOM.
YOU DIDN'T EVEN CONSIDER THAT THIS COULD BE THE HEART OF MY COUNTER-ATTACK.
AND NOW HERE YOU ARE, STANDING BEFORE ME.
SMACK-DAB IN THE MIDDLE OF MY TRAP.
YOU'RE IN THE BIRDCAGE I CONSTRUCTED.

...IN A CAGE LIKE THIS...
...YOU KNOW YOU CAN ONLY FLY SO HIGH.
NO MATTER HOW STRONG YOUR WINGS MAY BE...

SIGN: MUSIC ROOM #6



...I WILL SMASH THEM TO PIECES.
A GNAT LIKE YOU COULDN'T POSSIBLY CLIP MY WINGS.
ALL THE PLANS YOU SO CAREFULLY CRAFTED ...
...AND THIS BIRDCAGE TOO...
THE FACT THAT I'M HERE IS PROOF OF HOW AT EASE I AM.
I CAME HERE ON PURPOSE.
TO LET YOU KNOW JUST HOW POWERLESS YOU ARE.
AND TO SHOW YOU WHAT TRUE DESPAIR IS.

YOU DON'T HAVE THE POWER TO CHOOSE YOUR OWN FUTURE.
DON'T DENY IT. YOU'VE ALREADY GIVEN ME A FIGHTING CHANCE.
...YOU CAN'T FLY.
...THAT WAY OF THINKING ALONE ...
...IS PROOF THAT YOU'RE ALREADY DEEP IN MY TRAP.
YOU CAN'T CARRY OUT YOUR RESOLVE COMPLETELY.
YOU LACK THE COURAGE TO CHOOSE YOUR OWN FUTURE.

AS YOU ARE NOW ...
...THIS CAGE WILL NOT FALL.

I SEE EXACTLY WHAT YOU'VE DONE HERE.
AND KNOWING WHAT'S IN STORE GIVES ME NOTHING TO FEAR.
I DON'T THINK SO.
WITH YOUR LOGIC, THERE'S NO WAY YOU CAN FORESEE WHAT I'VE PLANNED.
AND NOW ...
...LET'S SEE YOU...
BYU (WHIP)
...KEEP YOUR COOL OVER THIS!!

KON
(THUNK)

KANON HILBERT!
OVER THE NEXT FOUR SECONDS, WE'RE ALL WALKING A TIGHTROPE.
DON'T DO SOMETHING THAT'LL MAKE ME KILL YOU!!

THAT LITTLE BROTHER REALLY IS SOME-THING...
HE KNEW MY BODY WAS IN THE WORST STATE OF THE BUNCH.
THAT'S WHY HE GAVE ME THE EASIEST JOB.
IT TAKES FOUR SECONDS FOR A GRENADE TO GO OFF AFTER THE PIN'S REMOVED.

SO ATTACKING AND DEFENDING IN THOSE FOUR SECONDS IS THE FIRST STEP ON THE TIGHTROPE.
KANON-KUN WINS IF HE GETS THE LITTLE BROTHER TO KILL HIM.
BECAUSE FOR HIM TO WIN, THE LITTLE BROTHER HAS TO LIVE.
THERE LIES THE KEY TO CORNERING HIM.

IN OTHER WORDS, IF THE LITTLE BROTHER DIES, HE WON'T BE ABLE TO KILL KANON-KUN LIKE KANON-KUN WANTS.

IN FACT, YOU COULD GO SO FAR AS TO SAY THAT...
...IF THE LITTLE BROTHER TRIED TO KILL HIMSELF ...
...SAY, BY RUNNING INTO THE BLAST ZONE OF A GRENADE...
...KANON-KUN WOULD HAVE TO DO EVERYTHING HE COULD TO PROTECT HIM, JUST TO SECURE HIS VICTORY.

IF EVEN ONE GRENADE DETONATED IN THE MUSIC ROOM, THE LITTLE BROTHER WOULD BE KILLED FIRST.
OF THE THREE GRENADES, ONE IS A DUD.
BUT KANON-KUN DOESN'T KNOW THAT.
EVEN IF THERE WERE ONLY ONE REAL GRENADE, HE'D HAVE TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT.
...HE'LL HAVE TO SAVE THE LITTLE BROTHER BY GETTING THE GRENADES OUT OF RANGE.
FOR KANON-KUN TO SECURE HIS VICTORY ...
THAT'S THREE GRENADES TO TAKE CARE OF...
...IN ONLY FOUR SHORT SECONDS!

MEAN-WHILE, DURING THOSE FOUR SECONDS ...
...THE LITTLE BROTHER AND HIS SISTER WILL COME AT KANON-KUN WITH ANESTHETIC WEAPONS FROM BOTH SIDES.
THAT'S ONE MORE THING FOR KANON-KUN TO DEAL WITH.
AND SINCE IT'S COME RIGHT DOWN TO THE WIRE LIKE THIS...
IF IT WERE ME OR KOUSUKE-KUN OR RYOUKO-CHAN, HE WOULDN'T HESITATE TO KILL US TO STOP US.
BUT HE CAN'T KILL THE LITTLE BROTHER OR HIS SISTER.

...EVEN IF THEY TAKE MULTIPLE SHOTS TO THE BODY...
...NEITHER OF THEM IS ABOUT TO BACK DOWN.

THERE'S NO WAY HE CAN EASILY STAVE OFF THEIR DUAL ATTACK.
SINCE THE LITTLE BROTHER AND HIS SISTER ARE THROWING THEIR BODIES RIGHT INTO THE HEART OF THE DANGER...
...THEY'VE ADDED EVEN MORE LIMITS TO WHAT KANON-KUN CAN DO.
TCH!
THEY'VE TAKEN KANON-KUN'S CONDITIONS FOR WINNING AND TURNED THEM INTO SHACKLES.

THIS IS HOW WE WILL TAKE AWAY KANON-KUN'S CONTROL OVER HIS BATTLE REFLEXES.
EVEN FOR KANON-KUN, THIS SET-UP WON'T BE EASY TO ESCAPE.
WITHOUT ANY ROOM TO THINK, HIS ABILITY TO RESTRAIN HIS ACTIONS IS BEING PUSHED TO THE LIMIT!

THIS IS THE FIRST TIGHTROPE TO CROSS!!
AND IN THE FRENZIED SITUATION, THE LITTLE BROTHER AND HIS SISTER COULD GET BE KILLED IN THE CROSSFIRE.
BUT THERE'S STILL THE DANGER THAT IF KANON-KUN DOESN'T MANAGE TO GET THE GRENADES AWAY, THEY COULD ALL DIE.

STILL... THIS IS KANON-KUN WE'RE DEALING WITH.

HE COULD VERY WELL SUCCEED IN NOT KILLING THEM...

BUT THERE'S A CATCH.
...WHILE HE QUICKLY DISPOSES OF ALL THREE GRENADES.

IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE ATTACK COMMENCES, KANON-KUN WILL BE ENTIRELY FOCUSED ON REMOVING THE GRENADES. HE WON'T HAVE TIME TO THINK ABOUT ANYTHING ELSE.
THAT'S WHEN...

...EYES-KUN JUMPS IN, ARMED WITH ANESTHETICS!!

WITHOUT THINKING, KANON-KUN WILL REFLEXIVELY MOVE TO ATTACK AND KILL HIS TARGET!
BUT THIS IS WHERE THE SECOND TIGHTROPE COMES IN.
EVEN THOUGH EYES-KUN IS A BLADE CHILD...
...KANON-KUN STILL CAN'T BRING HIMSELF TO KILL HIM.
IT'S ALL BECAUSE KANON-KUN DOESN'T WANT TO KILL EYES-KUN...
...THAT HE WANTS THE LITTLE BROTHER TO TAKE HIS LIFE INSTEAD...

BUT WE WOULD HAVE TO AS WELL.

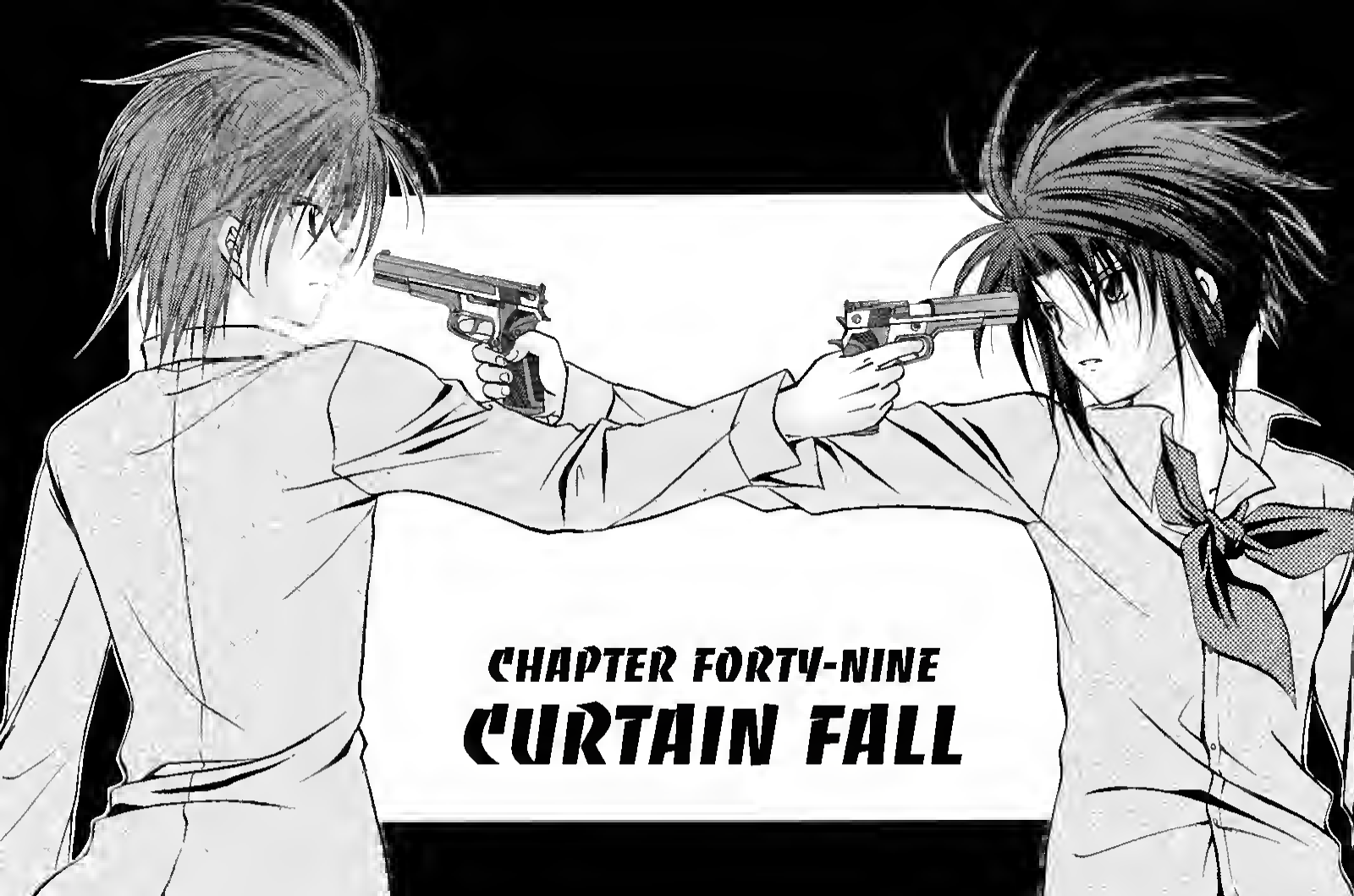
WHETHER KANON-KUN CAN EFFECTIVELY STOP HIS ATTACK ON EYES-KUN OR NOT...

...HANGS ON THE MOST DELICATE TIGHTROPE YET!
DON (BOOM)

DON'T FAIL!
KANON-KUN!
EYES-KUN!

Spiral
THE BONDS OF REASONING

SPIRAL



CHAPTER FORTY-NINE
CURTAIN FALL

DON
(BOOM)

...CAN WE MAKE IT ACROSS...
...SUCH A FRAGILE, NARROW TIGHT-ROPE!?
DAAN (BLAM)

PATA (FLOP)
TAN (THUD)

HAA (PANT) はあ
HAA はあ
HAA はあ
はあ HAA
HAA はあ
ガク (GAKU (COLLAPSE))
KOHO (COUGH)
こほっ
HE DIDN'T KILL RUTHERFORD, DID HE!?
WHAT HAPPENED...?

HAA
はあ
HAA (PANT)
はあ
YOU GUYS LOSE.
I USED YOUR OWN ANESTHETIC PISTOL TO PUT EYES TO SLEEP.
I ONLY FIRED A BULLET TO SHATTER HIS GUN.
HE ISN'T DEAD.
MUKU (RISE)
むく
...DON'T WORRY.
I SAW EXACTLY WHAT YOU HAD UP YOUR SLEEVE.
DIDN'T I TELL YOU?
...IT WASN'T JUST TO CALL ME HERE. IT WAS TO LURE IN EYES TOO, WASN'T IT?
WHEN YOU PLAYED "THE BLESSING OF GOD IN SOLITUDE"...
I KNEW YOU WERE COUNTING ON EYES TO BE YOUR TRUMP CARD.

I'D PLANNED TO STEAL AN ANESTHETIC WEAPON RIGHT FROM THE START.
...I GOTTA SAY, THIS PISTOL ...
...PACKS QUITE A PUNCH.
IT TOOK DOWN EYES IN ONE SHOT.
IF NOT FOR THIS, I MIGHT'VE KILLED HIM.
YOUR OWN WEAPONS GAVE ME MY VICTORY.
...THIS KID REALLY IS A MONSTER.
NOT ONLY DID HE ANTICIPATE OUR PLAN OF ATTACK, BUT HE MANAGED TO STEAL ONE OF OUR OWN WEAPONS FROM US.
SOMEHOW, HE SPARED ENOUGH CONCENTRATION TO CONTROL HIS REFLEXES ...
HE WAS ABLE TO THWART OUR ATTACKS WHILE STILL DISPOSING OF THE THREE GRENADES ...
...AND SABOTAGED EYES RUTHERFORD'S LAST CHARGE.
HE JUDGED THE SITUATION AND THEN EXECUTED THE APPROPRIATE MOVES PERFECTLY.

IF HE CAN STILL FIGHT LIKE THAT EVEN WITH HIS LEGS AND HANDS TIED, SUPPRESSING HIS REFLEXES ...

... THEN, JUST HOW STRONG IS HE, ALREADY SURPASSING THE USUAL LEVELS OF REASONING AND CONSCIENCE?

WHAT DEVIL'S SPAWN IS HE!?

MADOKA NARUMI'S ARMS HAVE BOTH BEEN TAKEN OUT OF COMMISSION.
SHE WON'T HAVE AN EASY TIME STANDING UP EITHER.
YOU MAY HAVE NEARLY RECOVERED FULL USE OF YOUR RIGHT ARM, BUT YOU'RE IN NO SHAPE TO BE RUNNING NOW.
AND THANKS TO THOSE ANESTHETICS, EYES WON'T BE WAKING UP FOR A WHILE.
AND LET'S NOT FORGET, YOU GUYS ARE OUT OF WEAPONS.
...NOW THEN.
WHAT DO YOU SAY WE LET THE FINAL CURTAIN FALL?
AYUMU-KUN.

GUI (YANK)
SUTA
SUTA (STEP)
SU (SWISH)
GACHA (KACLICK)
!!
S-S!!

IT STILL HAS THREE ROUNDS LEFT IN IT.
PICK UP THAT GUN...
... AYUMU-KUN.
I WANT YOU TO PICK IT UP...
...AND PRESS THE BARREL AGAINST MY FOREHEAD.
... RAISE YOUR ARM...
I'M SURE YOU KNOW HOW TO PULL A TRIGGER.
THE GUN I GAVE YOU BEFORE IS TOO BIG A PAIN TO DEAL WITH.
USE THAT ONE.

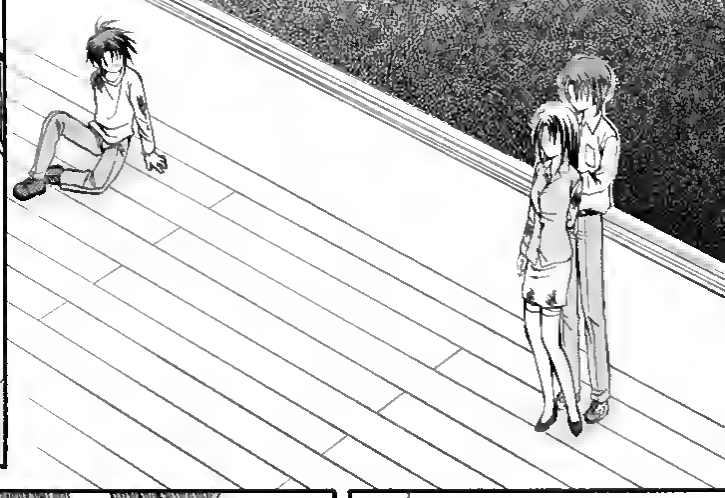
THINK ABOUT IT!
YOU KNOW HE CAN'T KILL ME!
HE'S JUST PLAYING YOU BY TAKING ME HOSTAGE!
DON'T GIVE UP NOW!
AYUMU!
THIS IS WHY I DIDN'T TAKE OUT YOUR RIGHT ARM.
JUST STAY CALM!
YOU'LL FIND A WAY OUT OF THIS!!
KUU (URGH)
GI (WRENCH)

SHE'S RIGHT. I CAN'T KILL HER.
!!
BUT UNFORTUNATELY FOR YOU, I CAN SPEND AS MUCH TIME HURTING HER AS I WANT.
KO (CLICK)
0%
PICK UP THE GUN...
IF YOU DON'T PICK IT UP RIGHT NOW...
...I'LL START BY BLOWING HER EAR OFF.
... AYUMU-KUN.

FIRST HER EARS, THEN HER CHEEKS.
THEN HER EYES.
THEN HER NOSE.
I'LL SHOW YOU ALL SORTS OF THINGS I CAN DO.
...WHILE YOU WASTE TIME DELIB-ERATING, I'LL PUT HER THROUGH HELL.
...WHAT I'M TELLING YOU TO DO ISN'T ALL THAT HARD.
...AND PRESS IT AGAINST MY FOREHEAD.
...STAND UP...
JUST GET THE GUN...

...THIS IS A NECESSARY RITE OF PASSAGE FOR YOU.
SOME DOORS NEVER OPEN UNLESS YOU LEARN HOW TO KILL A MAN.
ALL YOU HAVE TO DO...
...IS KILL ME.
SO JUST DO IT.
THINK OF IT AS SALVATION FOR ME TOO.

GU (PUSH)
WHAT'RE YOU WAITING FOR?
AYUMU-KUN.



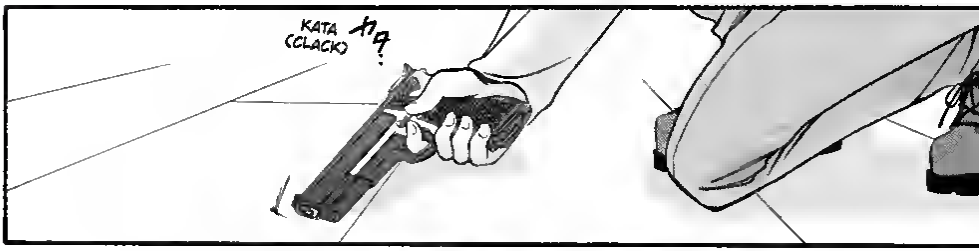
EVEN IF THEY CAME...
...NO...
...EVEN IF A WHOLE ARMY CAME TO HELP YOU, THEY WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO DO A THING ABOUT THIS SITUATION.

ARE YOU WAITING FOR RIO AND THE OTHERS TO SAVE YOU?

AS I AM NOW...
...I'VE GOT MY BACK AGAINST THE WALL, WITH ALL REFLEXES ON MAX ALERT.
I'VE GOT MADOKA NARUMI AS MY HUMAN SHIELD...
...READY TO USE NO MATTER WHAT SIDE I'M ATTACKED ON.

I'VE LEFT NO BLIND SPOTS OPEN.
EVEN IF RIO AND THE GANG SHOW UP, I'LL TAKE THEM OUT IN NO TIME.
EVEN IF EYES WAKES UP SUDDENLY...
...OR THE CEILING AND FLOOR GIVE WAY ...
...I'LL BE ABLE TO DEAL WITH THEM, NO PROBLEM.
THERE'S NOT ONE IOTA OF HESITATION OR PANIC INSIDE ME.
.....
TAKE THE GUN...
...AYUMU-KUN.

YOU'RE IN NO POSITION TO RESIST ANYMORE.


KATA (CLACK)
カ？

YORO (STAGGER)
ヨ？

WHAT KIND OF DOOR DO YOU THINK THIS IS SUPPOSED TO OPEN?
WHY DO YOU WANT TO DIE SO BADLY?
...I SWEAR ...
WHY DID THIS HAVE TO HAPPEN?
...YOU MEAN, DEATH IS YOUR FATE?
BECAUSE I HAVE NO OTHER HOPE THAN THAT.
I WANT TO DIE SO THAT I CAN HAVE HOPE.
...YES.

IT MAY SOUND CONVENIENT TO SAY, BUT...
...WHAT YOU'RE ABOUT TO DO IS ALSO FATE.
AYUMU!
DON'T GIVE IN LIKE THIS!
THINK IT THROUGH! THERE'S STILL TIME!
GIRI (GRIP)
AAH!
STOP IT!
I'M DOING WHAT YOU ASKED, AREN'T I!?

YOU'RE REALLY STRONG.
AND YOU'RE PRETTY SHARP.
...
HEY.
KANON HILBERT.
YORO (STAGGER)
.....
YOU'RE OBSERVANT AND FAST.
THE WAY YOU CRUSHED OUR WAVE ATTACKS ...
...AND ARE USING MY SISTER AS A MEANS TO PRESS ME INTO ACTION...
...AND PREDICTED MY WHOLE SCHEME WAS ALL THOUGHT OUT LOGICALLY AND EXECUTED AS EFFICIENTLY AS POSSIBLE.
TO (TMP)

IF I WERE PUT IN THE SAME SITUATION ...
DARA (DANGLE)
...AND I WERE AS CAPABLE AS YOU, I'D PROBABLY ASSUME THE SAME THING AND ACT ACCORDINGLY.
WHY, YOU ASK? BECAUSE THAT WAS THE SUREST WAY TO WIN USING REASON.
I KNEW THAT YOU, OF ALL PEOPLE ...
...WOULD PREDICT ALL MY MOVES AND USE THE MOST DIRECT MEANS TO DISPEL THE WHOLE SITUATION.
THAT'S RIGHT.
I PREDICTED ALL OF YOUR MOVES TOO.
THAT'S WHY I KNEW...
PITA (PAUSE)
...I'D NEED TO HAVE A PLAN READY FOR THIS PARTICULAR SPOT...
...FROM THE VERY START.

IS HE JUST TRYING TO BUY TIME?
IS HE CALCULATING THE MOMENT WHEN RIO AND THE OTHERS BURST IN?
OR IS THERE SOMETHING ELSE TO THIS?
WHAT'S HE GOING ON ABOUT?
(GOR) (GRIND)
QUIT WASTING YOUR BREATH.
YOU'D BETTER HAVE THAT BARREL AGAINST MY FOREHEAD BY THE TIME I COUNT TO THREE.
OTHERWISE I REALLY WILL BLOW MADOKA NARUMI'S EAR OFF.
ENOUGH!
LEAVE MY SISTER ALONE!
I'M GOING TO DO IT, OKAY!?

CHA (CLICK)
SU (LIFT)
KI (GLARE)

DO IT!!
GU (SHOVE)
WHAT THE ...!?

I DON'T BELIEVE IT!!
DAN (BLAM)

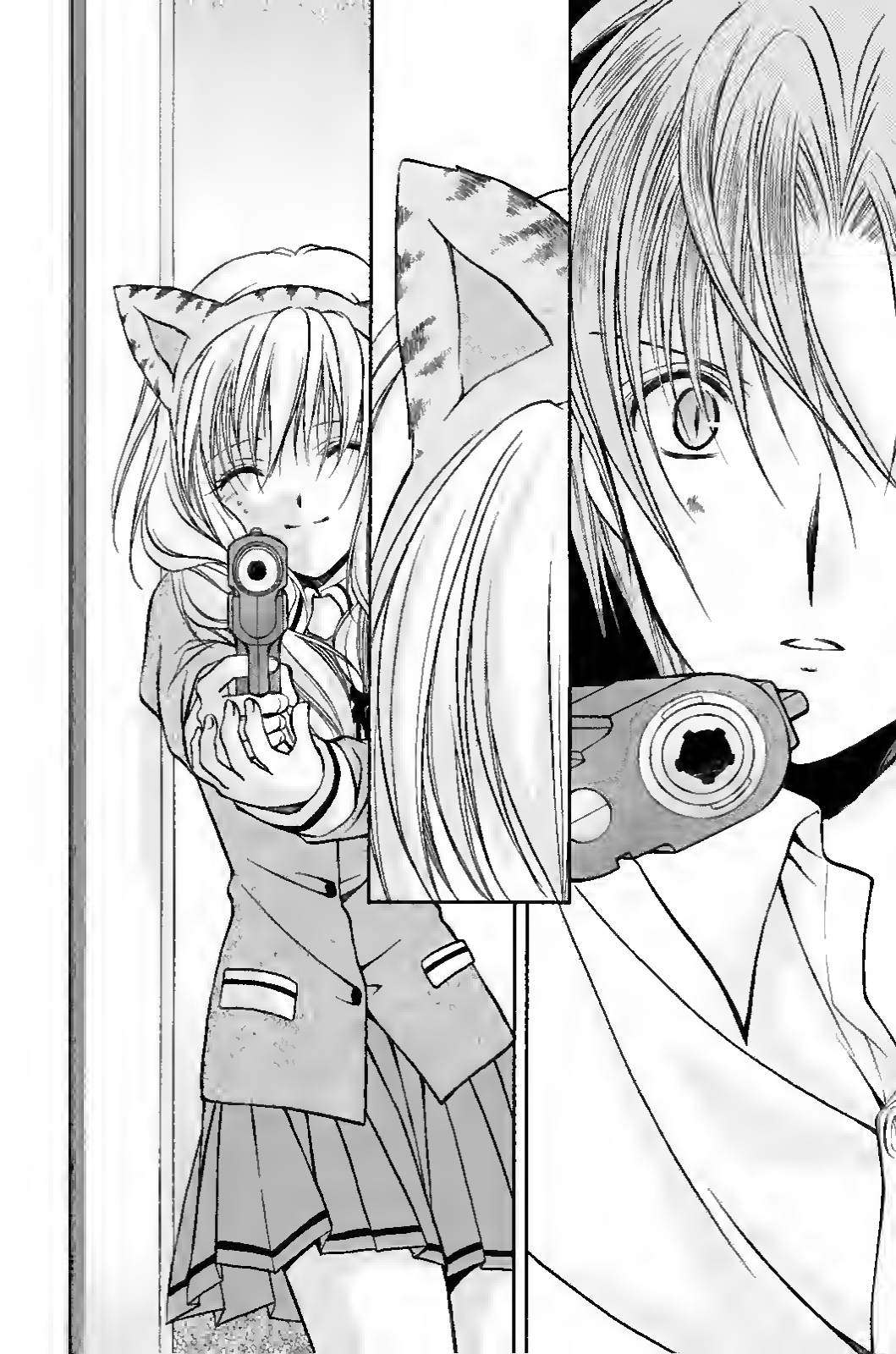
THE LITTLE BROTHER'S SISTER IS HIS ACHILLES HEEL.
SO IT'S EASY TO GUESS THAT KANON-KUN WILL PROBABLY USE HER AS A SHIELD...
THAT'S WHERE THE LITTLE BROTHER SEIZES OUR CHANCE FOR VICTORY!
AND JUST WITNESSING THE LITTLE BROTHER HARM SOMEONE SO PRECIOUS TO HIM...
...WILL THROW KANON-KUN OFF COMPLETELY.
WITH HIS SISTER ACTING AS HIS SHIELD, KANON-KUN WON'T EVEN SEE THE SHOT COMING.

AT POINT-BLANK RANGE LIKE THAT, THE BULLET WILL PASS THROUGH HIS SISTER...
...AND PIERCE KANON-KUN, STANDING BEHIND HER.
EVEN IF IT DOESN'T HIT HIM, THE SITUATION BEING SO OUTSIDE HIS CALCULATIONS WILL THROW KANON-KUN'S PSYCHE INTO DISARRAY.
BA (WHAP)
HE WON'T BE ABLE TO REACT COHERENTLY TO WHAT COMES NEXT!
HE'LL INSTINCTIVELY TRY TO SHOOT THE LITTLE BROTHER FOR HAVING ATTACKED HIM!

BUT KANON-KUN CAN'T LET HIMSELF KILL THE LITTLE BROTHER!
HIS BODY WILL PUT ON THE BRAKES AND GRIND HIS ACTIONS TO A HALT!!
BA
DO (WHAM)
NOW!
RUTHER-FORD!!

BA
(LEAP)
THEY KNEW THE FIRST ATTACK WOULD FALL THROUGH.
THE LITTLE BROTHER'S GUN AND HIS SISTER'S HAD THE ANESTHETIC FORMULA REMOVED FROM THE BULLETS AHEAD OF TIME.
JAK!
(KACLICK)
SHIT!
NOT YET!
I CAN STILL MAKE IT IN TIME!
THEY WERE COUNTING ON EYES-KUN TO BE ABLE TO ATTACK IN THE NEXT OFFENSIVE.

EVEN THEN, EYES-KUN IS ONLY A DIVERSION FOR KANON-KUN.
I WON'T LOSE!
DON (BLAM)
I'LL BEAT AYUMU-KUN'S TRAP YET!
BAN (BANG)
THE LITTLE BROTHER'S SET UP ONE MORE SURPRISE FOR HIM...
PIKU (TWITCH)
TAN (LAND)
...THE LAST AND FINAL ATTACK!!
BA (WHIP)



IT... IT CAN'T BE...
...HIYONO YUIZAKI!?
AFTER BEING THROWN OFF HIS GUARD SO MANY TIMES DURING THE ATTACK...
...THE LAST THING KANON-KUN WILL BE EXPECTING IS HIYONO-SAN TO SHOW UP.
HE WON'T BE ABLE TO CONTROL HIS BATTLE REFLEXES WITH THIS NEWEST THREAT...
...AND HIS BODY WILL FREEZE UP!

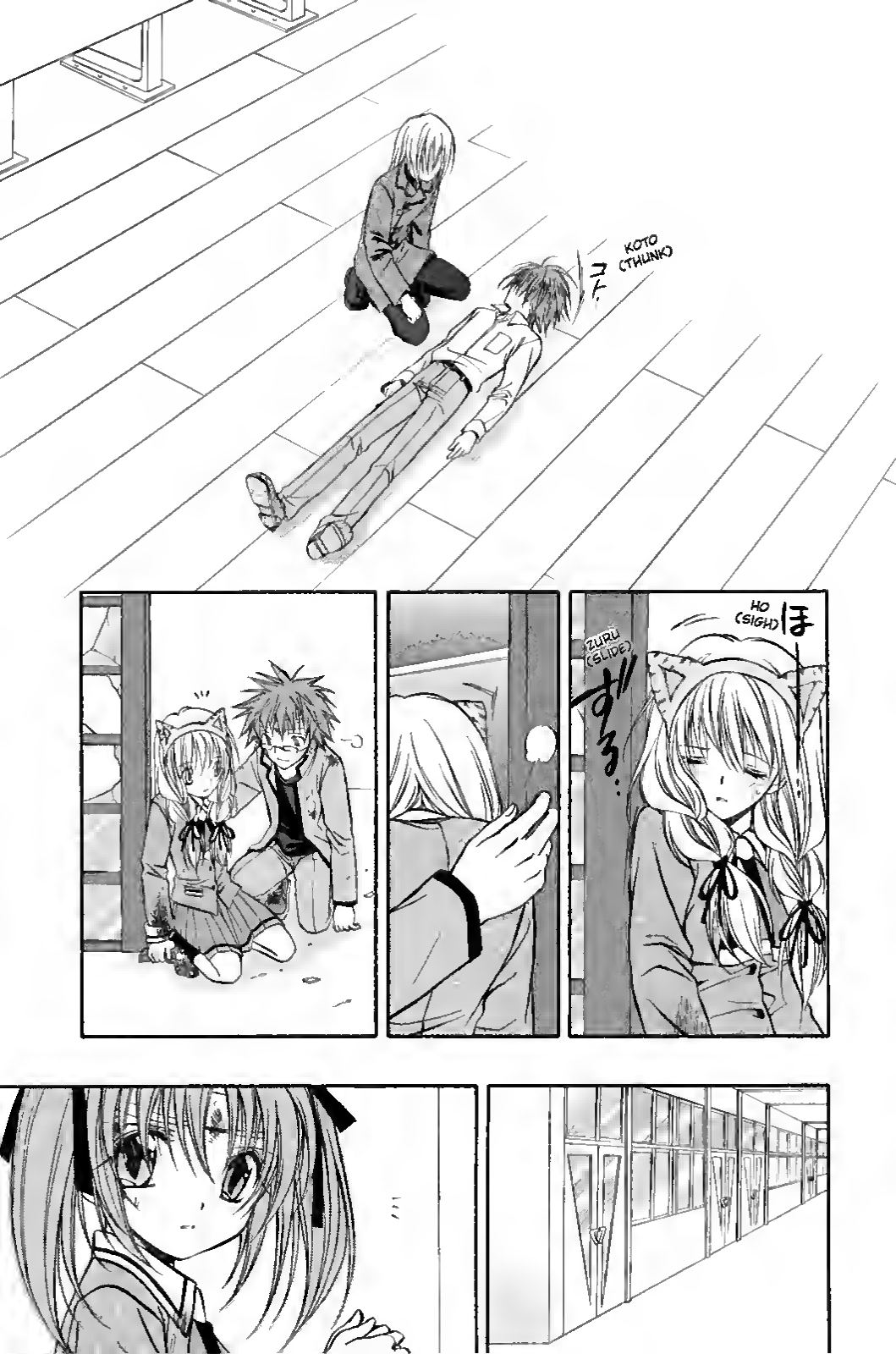
THE LITTLE BROTHER FIGURED THAT HIYONO-SAN WOULD BE DISABLED AND WOULD PROBABLY BE LEFT SOMEWHERE ON CAMPUS...
...SO HE SENT KOUSUKE-KUN AND RYOUKO-CHAN TO TRACK HER DOWN.
WE WERE RUNNING A RISK TRYING TO FIND HIYONO-SAN IN TIME, TO CREATE A SITUATION WHERE SHE COULD FIRE AT KANON-KUN WITH THE ANESTHETICS.
THIS IS OUR LAST TIGHTROPE TO CROSS!!
IF WE'VE GOTTEN THIS FAR...
...VICTORY'S AS GOOD AS OURS!!

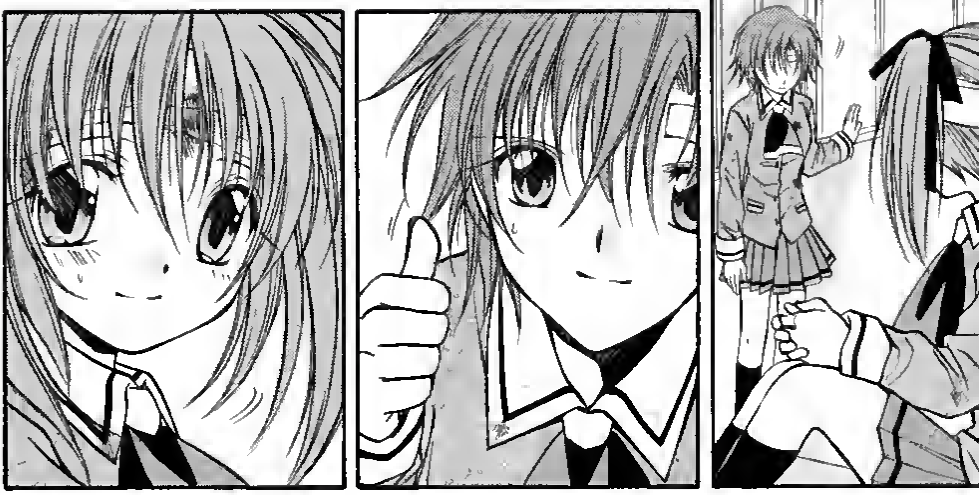
AND THERE'S NO ENCORE.
...SHOW'S OVER.
BAN (BANG)
TAN (THUNK)

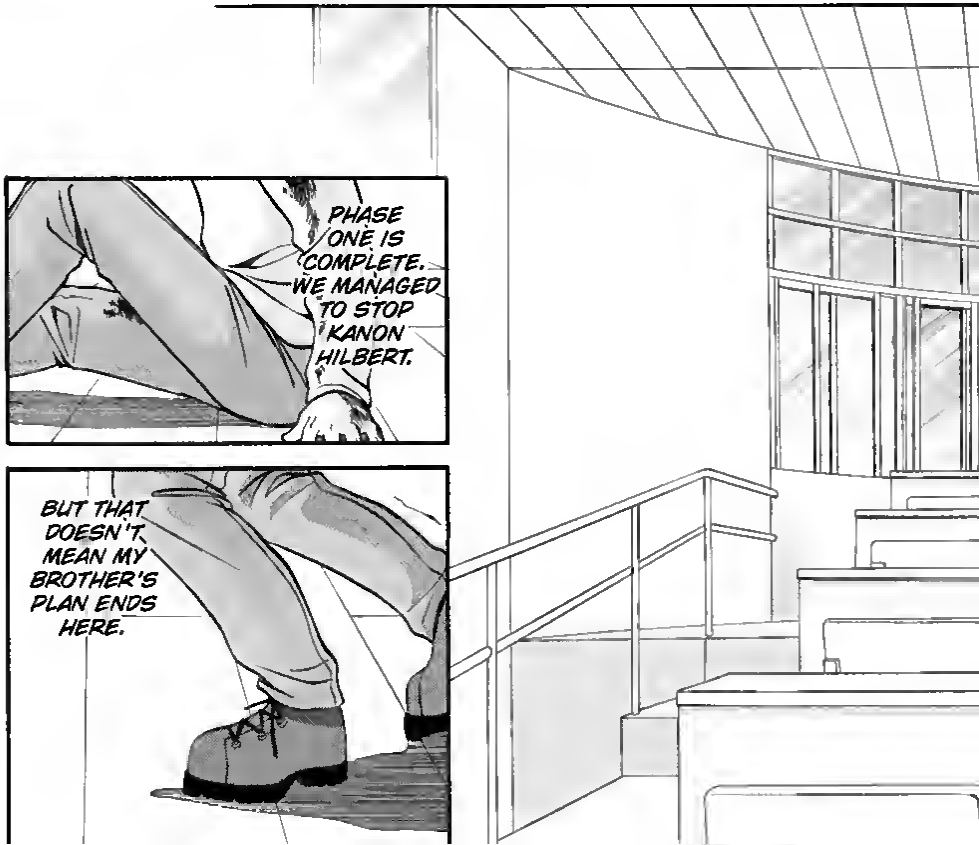
I... LOST ...!?
GURARI (REEL)
AYUMU NARUMI'S WILL AND REASON BEAT ME...!?
DO (THUD)
TON (THUNK)
SU (STEP)
.....

You lose...
... Kanon.

.....
Accept reality...
...believe in Ayumu Narumi's potential, and sleep...
.....
FLI (FAINT)


KOTO (THUNK)
ZURU (SLIDE)
HO (SIGH)




PHASE ONE IS COMPLETE. WE MANAGED TO STOP KANON HILBERT.
BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN MY BROTHER'S PLAN ENDS HERE.

...WE COULD EASILY FIND OURSELVES IN A NEVER-ENDING CYCLE.
AND I DON'T WANT TO HAVE TO SEE ANY MORE OF THIS ...
WHAT IS MY BROTHER TRYING TO DO, ANYWAY?
HOW DO ALL OF US FIT INTO HIS SCHEME?
.....
SO...

...I'M GOING TO LIFT MY HEAD ...
...AND FACE WHATEVER FATE AWAITS ME, NO MATTER WHAT!!

Spiral
THE BONDS OF REASONING

CHAPTER FIFTY
CONFESSIONS OF A CRAP ARTIST

.....
ARE ...
...ARE YOU OKAY, SIS?
YOU SHOULDN'T MOVE IF YOU DON'T HAVE TO.
DON'T WORRY, I'M FINE.
I'VE GONE THROUGH SO MUCH, IT BARELY REGISTERS WHETHER THIS HURTS OR NOT.
BESIDES ...

URK!
...ISN'T THERE ANOTHER GIRL YOU SHOULD BE WORRYING ABOUT MORE THAN ME?
FINE. I WON'T ARGUE ...
YORO (STAGGER)
チラ CHIRA (GLANCE)
ハァ (SIGH)

NO NEED.
KANON WON'T BE WAKING UP FOR A WHILE.
SHOULDN'T WE FIND SOMETHING TO TIE HIM UP WITH NOW?
THE ANESTHETIC SHOULD WORK FOR ANOTHER TWENTY TO THIRTY MINUTES.
.....?
SINCE LEAVING OUR GROUP ...
...KANON PROBABLY HASN'T HAD A SINGLE NIGHT'S SLEEP.

YOU'VE DEFEATED HIM.
THE TENSION HE'S BEEN FEELING ALL THIS TIME HAS BEEN COMPLETELY SNUFFED OUT NOW.
AFTER ALL THE STRESS HE'S ENDURED, HE'LL SLEEP LIKE THE DEAD.
.....
THIS IS WHEN THE SHOW REALLY STARTS...
...AYUMU NARUMI.

THERE'S NO ROOM FOR HESITATION NOW.
YOU'LL NEED TO FACE ALL THE QUESTIONS THAT HAVE PLAGUED YOU.
...YEAH.
I KNOW.
YOU'D BETTER NOT BE HIDING ANYTHING EITHER.
HEY.

YOU'RE LOOKING RAGGED, AS USUAL.
YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO ADD...
..."AS USUAL"!
I WAS HAVING A GREAT NAP UNTIL YOU TURNED TO ME FOR THE FINAL PHASE.
YOU REALLY DON'T CARE WHO YOU HAVE TO USE, OR HOW!
PUT A SOCK IN IT.
YOU STARTED IT.
IT'S ONLY FAIR THAT YOU WRAPPED IT UP.
THAT'S NOT THE ISSUE HERE!!

MUNYU (SQUISH)
WHAT'S WITH THESE CAT EARS ANYWAY!?
I MEAN, REALLY!!
WHY'D I HAVE TO WEAR THESE STUPID THINGS JUST TO FIRE THE ANESTHETIC!?
PESHI (SMACK)
WHY, YOU ASK?
I FIGURED, WHY NOT?
MUKA (PISSED)
YOU MEAN YOU MADE ME WEAR THEM PURELY ON A WHIM!?
NO.
I HAD A LEGITIMATE REASON FOR IT.
WITH THE SITUATION COMING DOWN TO THE WIRE, I KNEW THAT IF SOMEONE WEARING THOSE BURST IN...
...EVEN KANON HILBERT WOULD BE STARTLED, AND HIS BODY WOULD FREEZE UP.
I GUESS THAT'D FREEZE ANYONE IN THEIR TRACKS...
HE'S NOT YOUR AVERAGE SMART GUY.

I FIGURED THAT AN EXTRA SPLIT SECOND WOULD GIVE YOU A LITTLE MORE TIME TO NAIL HIM WITH THE BULLET.
.....
HE MIGHT'VE HAD THE SLIGHTEST SUSPICION THAT YOU'D BE STANDING THERE.
BUT HE'D NEVER SEE THE CAT EARS COMING.
HIS CRAZY IDEA ACTUALLY WORKED IN SUCH A HEAVY SITUATION.
I DON'T KNOW WHETHER TO CALL THAT AMAZING, OR WHAT...
...
...SIGH.
FINE. I DON'T EVEN CARE ANYMORE ...

YEAH, BUT IT WON'T BE EASY TO CLEAN UP THIS MESS...
AS LONG AS EVERY-THING WORKED OUT.
IF NOTHING ELSE, WE KNOW THAT THIS WHOLE THING BROUGHT SOMETHING VERY IMPORTANT TO LIGHT.
The fact that without me, you're completely helpless, Narumi-san.
.....

...SAY WHATEVER YOU WANT.
YOU'LL BRING ME TO RUIN ONE OF THESE DAYS.
... WHERE'RE YOU GOING?
I'M GOING DOWNSTAIRS TO FILL IN THE POLICE ON WHAT HAPPENED.
GIVEN THE SHAPE WE'RE IN, WE NEED SOME STRETCHERS AND AMBULANCES BROUGHT AROUND FOR US, DON'T YOU THINK?
...OH YEAH.
PITA (PAUSE)
HEY.
YOU.
YES, NARUMI-SAN?

PARDON?
THINK OF SOMETHING YOU WANT.
IF IT'S SOMETHING I CAN DO, I'LL MAKE SURE TO GRANT YOUR REQUEST.
BUT YOU ONLY GET ONE SHOT.
...ARE YOU OKAY WITH THAT...
... LITTLE LADY?
THEN WE CAN CALL IT EVEN.

...love doesn't ask for compensation!
SURE!
IT'S NOTHING.
...
AFTER ALL...
TON (TMP)

I'M COMING WITH YOU.
WAIT.
AYUMU NARUMI.
YOU CAN HANDLE THE POLICE ...
...BUT I'LL HAVE AN EASIER TIME DEALING WITH THE WATCHERS THAN YOU.
TON

HOW ARE MY BROTHER AND ME...
...CONNECTED TO IT ALL?
AND THEN YOU GUYS.
...WATCH-ERS.
HUNT-ERS.
BUT AT LEAST TELL ME WHAT ACTED AS THE CATALYST FOR THIS WHOLE CRAZY SCENARIO.
I DON'T EXPECT YOU TO EXPLAIN IT ALL RIGHT NOW.

.....
WAS IT THE BLADE CHILDREN?
...EVERY COIN HAS TWO SIDES.
WHERE THERE IS LIGHT, THERE IS SHADOW.
IS KIYOTAKA NARUMI, THE GOD AMONG MEN, THE MAIN PROBLEM?
OR MY BROTHER?
HASN'T IT EVER OCCURRED TO YOU?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

NO MATTER HOW OUTSTANDING A DETECTIVE MAY BE...
...WITHOUT CASES WORTHY ENOUGH FOR HIM TO TAKE ON, HIS VERY EXISTENCE HAS NO MEANING.
THE TWO SIDES TO A COIN.
LIGHT AND SHADOW.
GOOD AND EVIL.
WITHOUT AN EQUALLY OUTSTANDING CRIMINAL TO TRACK DOWN...
...A GREAT DETECTIVE IS USELESS.
THESE THINGS CANNOT EXIST WITHOUT THEIR COUNTER-PARTS.

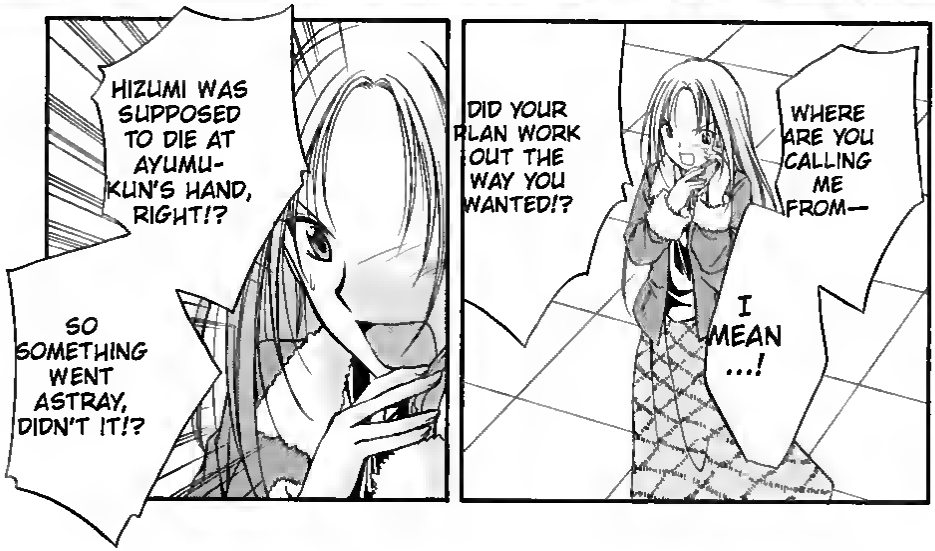
...WAIT...
DON'T-TELL ME YOU'RE SUG-GESTING...?
IF KIYOTAKA NARUMI...
...IS A GOD, THEN...
...DOESN'T IT FOLLOW THAT THERE MUST BE A DEVIL OUT THERE FOR HIM TO FACE OFF AGAINST?

RUTHER-FORD!
LITTLE BROTHER!
YEAH.
WE'RE ALL ALIVE.
FOR NOW.
I GUESS EVERYTHING ENDED SAFELY...

GOD AND THE DEVIL ACT AS TWO SIDES TO ONE COIN...
TWO INCOMPATIBLE POLAR OPPOSITES...
IN SUCH A DICHOTOMY...
...WHERE DOES THE LITTLE BROTHER OF THE GOD KIYOTAKA NARUMI STAND?

PU (CLICK)
KIRIE HERE.
PURURURURURU (RRRRRING)
You held up well.
Good job.

...KIYO-TAKA...
...NARUMI...!!


HIZUMI WAS SUPPOSED TO DIE AT AYUMU-KUN'S HAND, RIGHT!?
SO SOMETHING WENT ASTRAY, DIDN'T IT!?
DID YOUR PLAN WORK OUT THE WAY YOU WANTED!?
WHERE ARE YOU CALLING ME FROM—
I MEAN...!

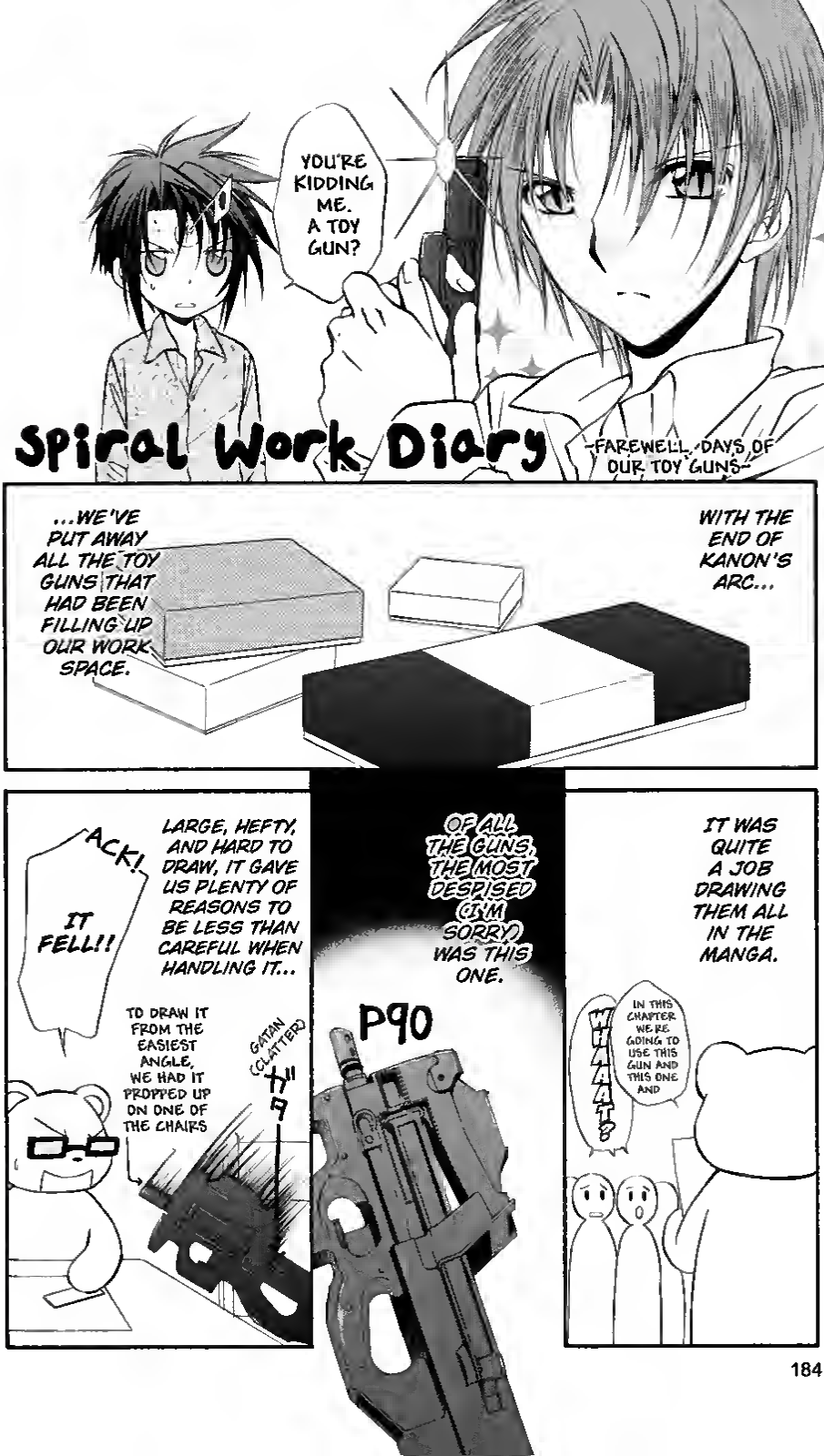
There are no stray moves in a board game.
Those meant to kill will kill...
Those meant to die will inevitably die.
Ayumu will figure out the truth very soon.
But when he realizes how the world truly works...
...will he have any hope left?
No one ...
...can escape ...

Spiral
THE BONDS OF REASONING

NEXT SPIRAL
PREVIEW
DO YOU BELIEVE IN THE ALMIGHTY CREATOR?
I LOVE MY SISTER MORE THAN ANYONE.
THE GREATEST MYSTERY IS REVEALED, AND THE TRUTH BEHIND IT AS WELL...
I LOVE HER AS A WOMAN.
TO FACE TOMORROW, FEELINGS COME TO THE SURFACE.
I'M READY TO FACE YOU.
ALL RIGHT, BROTHER.

EVES RUTHERFORD SPOKE OF A DEMONIC PRESENCE THAT WOULD BECOME THE COUNTERPART TO THE GODLIKE KIYOTAKA NARUMI. COULD THIS BE GOD'S NEW WILL TOO!?
GOD SENT A DEMON DOWN TO THE WORLD TO DESTROY MAN.
A MAN MISSING ONE RIB.
YAIBA MIZU-SHIRO.
WHAT IS THE SECRET BEHIND THE BIRTH OF THE BLADE CHILDREN!? OUR STORY HEADS TOWARD THE HEART OF THE MYSTERY!
THEY'RE THE CHILDREN CURSED BY YAIBA'S BLOOD TO DESTROY PEOPLE.
STRONGER THAN ANYONE
HIGHER THAN ANY-THING.
AN ABSOLUTE BEING WHO COULD NOT BE FELLED BY ANY HUMAN HAND.
TO BE CONTINUED IN VOLUME 11 OF "SPIRAL: THE BONDS OF REASONING"

To be continued. Please wait !


YOU'RE KIDDING ME. A TOY GUN?
Spiral Work Diary
-FAREWELL, DAYS OF OUR TOY GUNS-
...WE'VE PUT AWAY ALL THE TOY GUNS THAT HAD BEEN FILLING UP OUR WORK SPACE.
WITH THE END OF KANON'S ARC...
ACK! IT FELL!!
LARGE, HEFTY, AND HARD TO DRAW, IT GAVE US PLENTY OF REASONS TO BE LESS THAN CAREFUL WHEN HANDLING IT...
TO DRAW IT FROM THE EASIEST ANGLE, WE HAD IT PROPPED UP ON ONE OF THE CHAIRS
GATAN (CLATTER)
OF ALL THE GUNS, THE MOST DESPISED (I'M SORRY) WAS THIS ONE.
P90
IT WAS QUITE A JOB DRAWING THEM ALL IN THE MANGA.
IN THIS CHAPTER WE'RE GOING TO USE THIS GUN AND THIS ONE AND
HHH...?

...IT BROKE COM-PLETELY!
AND NOT LONG AFTER ...
GYA!!
GATAAN (CRASH)
...IT GOT A TINY CRACK IN IT.
IN NO TIME AT ALL...
CRAZY GLUE!!
.....
...I ENDED UP GLUING MY RIGHT THUMB AND INDEX FINGER TOGETHER!
I TRIED TO SLAP IT TOGETHER WITH SOME CRAZY GLUE, BUT...
SIGN: UNDER CONSTRUCTION
IT GOT ME THINKING ABOUT HOW CRISES LIKE THAT ALWAYS COME UP WHEN THERE'S A DEADLINE.
ZABU
ZABU (SPLASH)
THAT DAY JUST HAPPENED TO BE THE DAY WHEN ALL MY ASSISTANTS WERE COMING, SINCE THE DEADLINE WAS ONLY A FEW DAYS AWAY.
NOW, OF COURSE, IT'S A FOND MEMORY I LOOK BACK ON AND LAUGH AT.
I WONDER IF I'LL EVER OPEN SUCH A BIG BOX AGAIN
IT WAS DEFINITELY A TIME FOR HURRYING AND PANIC (BUT WE SOMEHOW PULLED IT OFF).
WELL, I HOPE TO SEE YOU NEXT TIME!

AFTERWORD

Hello, everybody. It's me, Kyo Shirodaira. Here we are at Volume 10. We've hit the double-digits already.

The "Kanon Arc" has finally come to an end. It really went on for quite a while there. Goes to show how poor I am at constructing a story.

For now at least, our characters' plan kept the violence to a minimum, we avoided any deaths, and Ayumu has decided to face the oncoming mysteries. We'll be safely continuing on to the "Concluding Arc" starting in the next volume, in which the mystery of the Blade Children that has been haunting our story all along will come to light. All the puzzles that have stumped us thus far will be resolved, and the real purpose of the story will be revealed.

The merciless voice of Kiyotaka-sama will ring down from above, and there's much to look forward to as Ayumu—having put truth at the forefront of his journey—will have a big decision to make. The end will be upon us sooner than you think.

And now for a completely trivial tangent.

Many days and months have passed since I started this job, and I've added quite a number of years to my career and to my life as a whole. And yet none of that seems to be reflected in my looks. I mean, I've always looked considerably younger than my real age would normally allow. In fact, you could call me downright "boyish." I've even been known to look in the mirror and wonder, "Who's that youngster standing there?" Even high schoolers these days look more mature than me. (Then again, when it comes to dealing with the real world, high schoolers these days are considered far more reliable than someone of my standing anyway).

If it were just a matter of "looking young" I wouldn't have a problem, but for all the worrying I've done and all the works I've produced, not to mention the fact that I haven't been living what you'd call a carefree life, it's no fun that I don't have the appearance of someone who works as hard as I do, and instead look more like an easygoing kid.

Since none of you readers out there will ever get to see what I look like anyway, this really is a trivial story for you to hear, like I said, but people also say that when you reach a certain age, you should be more mindful of your looks. Many of my colleagues have told me to quit worrying about my looks and pay more attention to my works, but since I refuse to cast the issue aside with a mere "trivial," here at least I can vent the last of my trivial-looks problems.

And so you see why this was a trivial tangent.

And now for an announcement.

Regarding the side-story novel that stars Kiyotaka Narumi as a great detective and has been running for so long on GANGAN NET (http://gangan.square-enix.co.jp/spiral/) in sync with the release of the comic version, the series is finally coming to an end with the wrap-up being featured in a full-length novel. Twelve-year-old Ayumu-kun is scheduled to appear in that final arc as well.

We are currently positing information about this novel on GANGAN NET. My apologies to those of you who enjoyed the story. But it really was a bigger pain in the butt than you probably realize.

So if you have the time, and find yourself under the right conditions, please check it out. (Note: Site available in Japanese only.)

And with that, I'll be praying to see you again in Volume 11.

KYO SHIRODAIRA

I COULDN'T THINK UP ANYTHING FOR A GAG BASED ON THIS VOLUME, SO HERE'S A PIECED-TOGETHER MANGA INSTEAD.

Shall we dance?

A yumu
N arumi

SPIRAL
The Bonds of Reasoning ⑩

Kyo Shirodaira
Eita Mizuno

Translation: Christine Dashiell

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This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

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